

Cultural Policy - Significant Challenges of the Georgian Government

*Prof. Manana Darchashvili,
Prof. Nino Nishnianidze,
Associate Prof. Emilia Alaverdov,*
Georgian Technical University, Georgia

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Abstract

The paper examines and discusses the role and place of culture in the formation of a modern peaceful environment based on the study of empirical material. Culture is presented - as the World's Sustainable Development – in the field of economical activation and empowerment of social and environmental components; the importance of Georgian culture and its interconnection with tourism, as it fosters the promotion, and at the same time, draws a special interest toward the cultural tourism. This creates a common promotion of cultural tourism and contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, the establishment of harmony and mutual understanding between people; is studied the development of cultural tourism attractions. Georgia's example demonstrates the importance of UNESCO-led projects and collaborations on unique cultural features; it aims to preserve the history of statehood and its originality, respect independence and faiths, etc., thus, promoting them in the world. The data presented in the paper show that with the active involvement of the authorities the current year (2019), (despite the problem in the country's tourism sector) the positive trend of the increasing number of visitors has been maintained in the protected areas of the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture. The paper examines the efforts of Georgian authorities to create a certain environment and a fertile ground for the preservation of national heritage, cultural diversity and its new perceptions, the development of creative activities and the diversification of cultural life.

Keywords: Culture, Politics, Cultural Tourism, Law

Introduction

Taking care of the welfare of society has always been a major concern of any government. As for the lifestyle of society - the values, norms and material goods produced by its members – are embedded in the culture.

The British) sociologist Anthony Giddens notes that there is the strongest connection between these two concepts: culture and society. No culture can exist without society, and no society can exist without culture since there is a mutual interdependence between culture and society (Giddens,1999). According to the most common and at the same time the shortest definition, culture is a part of the human environment created by people (spiritual and material culture is meant here) (Rerry, 1999).

It should be noted that the international approach - the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (November 2, 2001, General Conference) implies the establishment of solidarity based on recognition of cultural diversity, understanding human unity and strengthening intercultural exchanges. However, "the protection of human dignity is important for the wide dissemination of culture and for the education of mankind, which serves the goals of justice, freedom, and peace, and the sacred duty of all peoples is to provide it with the spirit of mutual help and care" (UNESCO General Declaration on Cultural Diversity, 2001).

At the present stage, in the context of relations between the state and society, the relevance of politics to culture has repeatedly become the subject of discussion, which examines and discusses the role of the state and society in the more effective management of cultural processes. Moreover, the culture represents the key factor of current debates in the field of identities, social unity, and the development of economics. This is the reason that the government (of Georgia), based on the law (article 34 of the Constitution) states that the country promotes development of culture, unlimited participation of citizens in their cultural life, manifestation and enrichment of cultural identities, recognition of national and universal values, and deepening of international cultural ties; every citizen of Georgia is obliged to protect and preserve the country's cultural heritage and understand that it is protected by law.

In addition to local legislation, the Georgian authorities have also shared co-operation obligations under international agreements (UNESCO, EU Eastern Partnership Culture Program, etc.) to strengthen the cultural sector and enhance the role of culture as the reformer, tolerant and social bonding. Accordingly, the study of this issue shows the dynamical changes of government, the examination of existing documents, the interest of political parties and its reflection in their documents, and initiatives undertaken by the country, to pursue the country's stated purpose and goal¹.

¹ Despite the positive results, the aimed goals not been reached yet. Since Georgia is a developing country and accordingly the support in cultural field is not been satisfying (many monuments still are still to be reconstructing).

The purpose of the paper is to study the cultural policy implemented by the Georgian authorities.

The study mainly uses an analysis method based on the study of historicism, documents and empirical material. The basis of source – scientific articles, the press materials and documents published on official websites in the field of cultural policy.

The hypothesis of the study is as follows: the government of all times in Georgia, as far as possible, tried to promote culture; at the present stage, to reach stated goals, to fulfil the taken obligations and develop the certain policy issues for political parties, the private sector and society, which will enable to overcome the existing challenges and problems.

Culture as an Important Dimension and Catalyst of the Modern International Community in the Development of Various Issues (on the example of Georgian context)

Life has proven that culture is a necessary tool for the formation of a peaceful, justified, humane environment.

International experience recognizes the role of culture in activating and enhancing the world's sustainable development - economic, social and environmental components. For this reason, the UN has recently adopted numerous resolutions on integrating the cultural component into the development agenda.

According to several studies, culture and creativity are among the top 3 labor fields of European countries, following the construction and food/beverage business, and its importance will increase further (Regulation of the Legal Entity of Public Law, 2015).

For Georgia, the importance of culture in this regard is especially connected to relations with tourism. As it is proved, tourism is one of the leading sectors of the world economy, and its role and importance are constantly growing. It is not surprising (X) that based on historical/geographical data foreign countries have always expressed a strong interest in Georgia. Tourism in Georgia has been the country's one of the leading priorities during recent years. The flow of tourists, both domestic and international, is steadily increasing. The development of tourism in the country is being studied and evaluated according to the regions. To promote the existing attitude, all relevant structures in Georgia strive to refine and develop their work.

The Global Tourism Code of Ethics (10/1999, 1999) considers cultural heritage as one of the key areas of tourism (Article 4), which contributes to the human development and at the same time stimulates society to understand the problems of the outside world, cultural heritage and their need for protection. The Code is important because it explicitly addresses the tourism

policies and activities based on respect for the arts, archeology and cultural heritage, preserving and revitalizing the identity of traditional culture, handicrafts and folklore, protect and transfer to them to the future generations (The Global Tourism Code of Ethics, 2001).

The purpose of the Statute of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia is directly stated - to develop international cooperation; conduct the research and popularization of Georgia's cultural heritage; prepare and implement cultural-educational and tourism programs; to promote and knowledge Georgian cultural heritage; the subject of the Agency's activities is the cooperation with relevant governmental, scientific, educational and other institutions of Georgia and abroad; organizing international and local scientific-practical conferences, sessions, symposiums, meetings, seminars, consultations about Georgia's cultural heritage protection issues; establishing business contacts and cooperation with leading scientific and educational centers abroad and international organizations working in the field of monument protection; promotion of organized tourism, which is expressed in the preparation/implementation of cultural-cognitive programs (Regulation of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage Preservation of Georgia, 2019).

It is noteworthy that the country, striving for development through a reasonable integrated policy, put forward the UN initiative about declaring 2017 as the international year with the motto “Sustainable Tourism for Development”. Naturally, caring, promoting and paying special interest to the culture – which is a solid ground for development and promotion of cultural tourism.

The World Tourism Organization defines cultural tourism – as the human journey, which is determined by cultural motivations, such as educational and scientific tours, art communion, festivals and other cultural events to attend, monuments and places of interest to visit, cultural traditions, folklore, art, pilgrimage, develop cultural ties, etc. (Annual Report 2017). The term "cultural tourism" for the first time was officially used in the Resolution # 49, "About Tourism and Resorts Development Activities of Georgia" by the President of Georgia on February 7, 1998 (Davidze, E., (2012).

The importance of cultural tourism is characterized by several components, and in addition to its economic and social benefits, it identifies the country as a tourist destination, contributes to the preservation of cultural heritage, to the development of harmony and mutual understanding among society and people.

Attractions and the issue of giving quality to tourism (especially in tourist countries) have an important place in the development of cultural

tourism.² Firstly, it should be noted that these are UNESCO recognized monuments and that the Interstate Committee annually adds new objects to the World Heritage List. The objects on the World Heritage List are divided into three groups - cultural, natural and cultural-natural. The object included in this list, as the most important creation of culture and history, enjoys the title of World Treasure.

Since October 7, 1992, Georgia has been a full member of UNESCO. Since then, based on Article 7, the Constitution of Georgia (based on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) was founded UNESCO National Commission, which the main goal is to coordinate and promote UNESCO's projects and activities in Georgia.³

Three cultural monuments of Georgia are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List (Mtskheta Historical Monuments, Zemo Svaneti, Gelati Monastery Complex).

Within the framework of the Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, a representative list of Intangible Cultural Heritage has been created, featuring 4 Georgian nominations:

1. Georgian Polyphony - in 2001, it was recognized by UNESCO as a masterpiece of human oral and intangible heritage, and in 2008, following Georgia's accession to the Convention on the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, Georgian polyphony was included in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

2. The ancient Georgian traditional method of pitcher winemaking - was introduced in 2013.

3. Live alphabet of three varieties of Georgian alphabet - was introduced in 2016.

4. Georgian Wrestling - was introduced in 2018. (Georgian National Commission for UNESCO, 2018)

The support of UNESCO member states, (it already became traditional) conducting several cultural events promotes the development of cultural tourism.⁴

The material presented in the example of our country demonstrates the importance of UNESCO-led projects and collaborations in promoting unique cultures, history of statehood, preservation of originality, respect for beliefs, and many other values.

International co-operation is very important for the country's international interest and it can be proved by the fact that in spring, 2017 Zurab Pololikashvili was elected as Secretary-General of the World Tourism

² A synonym for Georgian sightseeing (attractive in the specific sense).

³ Since 1992, the UNESCO National Commission on Georgian Affairs has had four Secretaries-General: Peter Metreveli, Irakli Metreveli, Ekaterine Enukidze, and Ketevan Kandelaki.

⁴ International festivals under the auspices of UNESCO, with the participation of world-famous musicians and more.

Organization (he will serve until 2021), which in some ways can be considered the acknowledgment of Georgia as a leading country in the tourism sphere.⁵ It is important that the next year on its initiative, Georgia will hold a meeting of the UN World Tourism Organization Executive Board. Pololikashvili noted that the host country has a long history and culture, which is considered the birthplace of wine, with a unique script and traditions, as well as hospitable people (European News Agency, 2019).

It is noteworthy that the Ministry of Economy and Sustainable Development - "Ministry of Tourism Strategy 2025", clearly express that, in order to develop the tourism opportunities and cope with challenges, the court should do its bests and offer to travelers high-quality, diverse tourist product and needs to be carefully focused on a number of aspects: Georgia has a rich and unique culture (music, dance, art, history, monuments of international and local importance; improvement and modernization of tourism-related infrastructure;) however, there is a great need to nurture Georgia's hospitality culture by providing training, education support and public awareness about the importance of tourism. To create unique and uplifting impressions for visitors using the country's cultural and natural wealth, 2025 Georgia will be recognized as an advanced, all-season, high-quality tourist country, distinguished by its cultural and natural heritage, world-class service and ancient hospitality founded by traditions.

It is noteworthy that the Georgian Law on Tourism and Resorts⁶ states that, "The state recognizes the tourism and resorts sector as one of the priority areas of national culture and economic development and creates favorable conditions for tourism and resort activities" (Law of Georgia on Tourism and Resorts, 1997).

To create a general picture of the engagement of Georgia in the International Tourism, we surveyed about the first quarter of the last five years to reveal the number of international visitors to Georgia (it is not a specific survey of cultural tourism, however, the data reveals Georgian cultural interests). As the World Tourism Council (WTTC) notes, international tourism is an important contributor to the development of the world economy, with its direct and indirect effects.⁷

⁵ "It will be a great success not only for me, but for the country as a whole, and once again appears that Georgia is one of the leading countries in the tourism sphere," he said.

⁶ Chapter II, State Policy and State Regulation in the Field of Tourism and Resorts, Article 4. Principles of State Regulation in the Field of Tourism and Resorts.

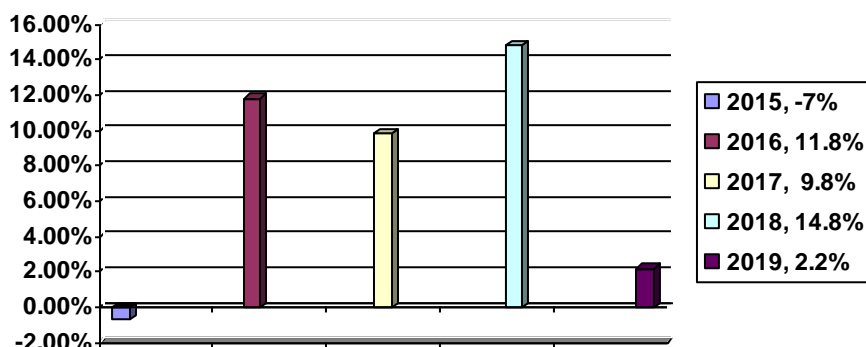
⁷ The official data are published by the National Tourism Administration of Georgia (information provided by the National Statistics Office). The first quarter was deliberately selected (as a neutral season).

International Traveler Visits (First Quarter, Table # 1)

Years (I quarter)	Total number of visitors	Percentage concerning the previous year	Indicative the changes of the visit	The visit in the cities (Tbilisi, Batumi, and others)	Most frequently visited activities
2015	1 122 035	- 0.7%	28.2% visiting friends, 24.2% having fun and vacations.	43.1 Tbilisi, 23.7% Batumi.	Not any
2016	1 254 855	11.8%	27.4 having fun and vacations, 25.9% visiting friends.	46% Tbilisi, 24.8% Batumi.	Shopping (65.8%); food and wine tasting (58.4%); visiting monuments (26.6%).
2017	1 378 097	9.8%	29.3% having fun and vacations, 26.9% visiting friends.	46.1% Tbilisi, 19.3% Batumi.	Shopping (72%); food and wine tasting (62.5%); visiting monuments (26.2%).
2018	1 582 382	14.8%	35.8% having fun and vacations, 21.6% visiting friends.	51% Tbilisi, 21.5% Batumi.	Shopping (72%); food and wine tasting (64.3%); visiting monuments (30.3%).
2019	1 617 548	2.2%	35.8% having fun and vacations, 21.6% visiting friends.	52.1% Tbilisi, 19.4% Batumi.	Shopping (58.4%); Food and wine tasting (67.4%); visiting monuments (36.9%).

From these data, we can conclude that the statement made by the World Tourism Council on the development of various directions of the contribution of international tourism shows that there is a great interest toward the Georgian culture.

Variation of the number of visitors per year



International cultural and sports events, which are actively used to attract tourists, should be considered as a contributing factor to cultural tourism, to promote a state-funded touristic place. With the joint effort and involvement of the authorities, this year (2019), in spite of the problem created in the Georgia's tourism sector (the tense political situation caused by the visit of a senior Russian politician reduced Russian tourists flow⁸) there is still positive trend in the number of visitors to the protected areas of the Ministry of Environment and Agriculture (TV 25, News Agency).

The fact is that the task of the Georgian government is to develop and implement a plan to enrich natural and cultural resources as a world-class tourism product and a unique opportunity to attract more high-quality tourists from around the world, is practically implemented.

Culture Policy of the Georgian Government

In the modern global world, the role of individual small states is quite lowered and reduced(;) but the importance of developing their own national identity is increasing. Georgian national identity is closely linked to culture, the preservation of identity and cultural traditions, and the establishment of a certain place in the international system.

⁸ Since it is well known that, the relations between Russia and Georgia have been tense for already for many years, Georgian population protested the visit of Russian politician to Georgia, On June 20, Georgia was hosting the Inter-Orthodox Parliamentary Assembly in the Parliament of Georgia, one of participants was a member of Russia's Duma Sergei Gvarilov, who occupied the seat of the chair of the Parliament of Georgia. There arose a protest among the Georgian citizens and as a result the country was seized in protests. On June 20 the situations became critical and some of the protesters were severely injured. Due to this, the direct flights between Georgia and Russia were canceled and it got a very negative impact on the Georgia's tourism industry (the negative changes in 2019 are shown in the chart above, as for the changes in previous years, there is a slight difference and variations which are appropriate for tourism industry and is not a surprise and critical).

However, it requires some effort – the government has to conduct such politics that will enable it to protect and preserve existing values and to introduce and develop innovations.

In our diverse society, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction between diverse and dynamic cultural identities, as well as their aspiration to coexist. Hence, government policy should promote citizen engagement for social cohesion, the viability and peace of civil society, since, in this respect, the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity states (UNESCO 2001) (cultural pluralism is a political response to the realities of cultural diversity). Cultural pluralism is an integral part of democracy and creates the best conditions for the development of cultural exchanges and creative opportunities, which is a growing resource of society. Certainly, Georgia has this obligation (under this declaration) and Article 9 of the above-mentioned declaration states that cultural policy is a catalyst for creativity and tries to conduct government cultural policy and ensure the free dissemination of ideas and works, to create favorable conditions for cultural objects and provide services through cultural industries that have the ability to establish themselves locally and globally.

In Georgian reality (as already mentioned), all this is well comprehended and regulated by the Georgian Law on Culture,⁹ which, as stated in the law, establishes the priority of culture, cultural heritage in the harmonious upbringing and development of the individuals, in their unrestricted self-expression, the manifestation, and enrichment of the cultural identity of every citizen, the moral perfection and humanization of the whole society.

It also takes into account the centuries-long rich traditions of Georgian national culture, the experience of civilized nations of the world in the field of culture; imposes the obligation of the state - to promote cultural values of its citizens, the unrestricted participation of citizens in cultural life, the access to culture, the universal recognition of national and universal values, to deepen and enhance international cultural relations, create and support integration; together with the establishment of human rights and freedoms in the field of culture, to determine the obligation of each citizen to preserve and protect cultural heritage; Law of Georgia “On the Priority of Culture in the Field of Culture and its Strategic Importance”, obliges the state supreme and local authorities to provide maximum financial and other material and technical assistance to all cultural fields. (Law of Georgia on Culture, 1997)

It indicates that even though in Georgia, the late twentieth century, due to civil strife, and the complex political peripheries, (how much of these in Georgia?) the Georgian authorities attempted to regulate the issue by adopting

⁹ The Georgian Law on Culture is the legal basis for the development and preservation of culture in the country, 12/06/1997. Parliamentary Agencies, 33, 31/07/1997

the law, though this period left a heavy legacy in the development of the cultural field. However, despite existent numerous events, reforms and rebuildings country since 2003,¹⁰ Georgian artists often harshly criticized the government for the lack of attention to cultural policy priorities,¹¹ modern art and its development.

Playwright David Gabunia considers the cultural policy, 2003 impossible to be evaluated because of the simple reason, that individual cultural initiatives did not gain the form of a unified systematic policy. "It is interesting that decisions were often made based on political belonging to individuals, and in many cases the Ministry of Culture and the Tbilisi City Hall did not hide it. If the qualification of staff is not in great importance, it is vague on what basis individual cultural projects were financed," he notes (Kavtaradze, 2012).

Despite the extensive list of activities, the word "washed up" pronounced by President Mikheil Saakashvili has always referred to the former government. Nika Rurua, the Minister of Culture of that period, stated that cultural policy should be focused not only on preserving the existing but also on extending them and support young creative groups and people to conduct the events in the different fields, and they should have unconditional support from the state, since this policy is directly connected with the country's economic benefits.

It is important to note the priority of the cultural issue in the pre-election program of the ruling party, Georgian Dream, which indicates that Georgia as a result of its cultural activities will become a dignified member of the modern world. In addition, the authorities will develop such kind of strategic plan for the development of culture, which will facilitate the integration of Georgian culture into the world. The unrestricted activities of Georgian citizens in the field of culture and the involvement of the government will facilitate this process.

Since 2012, the political union Georgian Dream came to power the issue about the cultural policy and its implementation is on the agenda. First of all, the emphasis is on the need to depoliticize the culture and properly manage the budget.

In 2016, the Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia adopted cultural "Strategy 25" stating Georgia's Government mission - to create a conducive environment and a fertile ground for national heritage, cultural diversity and its new comprehension, the development of creative

¹⁰The "United National Movement" came to power. In order to introduce democracy in the country numerous reforms were held almost in every sphere and directions (especially the changes were done in the fields of judicial, education, healthcare, cultural, etc.)

¹¹ The priority of Ministry of Culture and Monument Protection of Georgia for the last 10 years has been the protection of monuments, their restoration, and conservation, popularization of folk music.

activities and the diversification of cultural life, with clearly stated working strategic directions (Culture Strategy 2025, 2016).

As soon as the Georgian Dream came to the power it developed a program “For a strong, democratic, united Georgia”, with the declaration of the state's cultural policy aimed at preserving the country's national and cultural identity. According to the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, cooperation with the EU will be ensured to develop and implement an inclusive culture policy.

The course continues afterward as well. As a result, in the country was developed and established a new program, "Culture Strategy 2025" which defines a state's vision, goals, and objectives in the cultural sector. Georgia is the first country among the EU's Eastern Partnership which became a member of the EU's “Creative Europe” program and plans to launch many cultural events in the upcoming years (Government of Georgia, general data and directions for 2018-2021, 2017).

Summary - Recommendations

Summary

- Based on the analysis of the empirical material studied in this paper, it is clear that in the modern international system the role of individual states is somehow reduced and weakened, but in fact, the importance of developing their own national identity in these states is increasing.
- Georgia's national identity is closely linked to culture, preserving its identity and cultural traditions, simultaneously promoting a certain place in the international system.
- Georgia supports any organization working in the field of cultural tourism development, which can be achieved through cooperation with local inter-disciplinary and international, non-governmental organizations, public and private sectors.
- In Georgia government always tried to regulate cultural field, popularize, protect and develop Georgian culture; promote cultural tourism.

Recommendations

- To promote the Georgian culture, it is desirable to involve citizens and local people in more integrated programs, based on the study of specific situations and events.
- The government needs to ensure a wide awareness of citizens following the requirements of the cultural tourism development.
- To unleash the potential of cultural tourism, many factors are required: preservation of cultural heritage at an appropriate level; regulation/provision of information, communication, marketing.

- With the maximum development of cultural tourism, which emphasizes the cultural diversity of Georgia and its importance, public interest should be directed to protect cultural diversity and heritage.
- The development of culture requires more effort from the authorities. Accordingly, it is desirable to reorganize the Ministry of Education, Science, Culture, and Sports, and divide it, since education and culture require a great deal of development effort from the authorities.
- For the internationalization of Georgian culture and the popularization of the country, it is necessary: to have much more support from the authorities for participation in important international events; deepening and enhancing intercultural dialogue at different levels.

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